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WASHINGTON STATE RECORDS COMMITTEE

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DIVISION OF ARCHIVES AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT SERVICES AND ASSISTANCE

P.O. Box 40238 " 1129 Washington St SE " Olympia, WA 98504-0238

Washington State Archives and Records Management is a division of the Office of the Secretary of State. The division operates under the provisions of Chapter 40.14 RCW, the Public Records Act, which also regulates the disposition of all state and local government records.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The Division of Archives and Records Management provides technical advice and support for compliance with legal requirements and the development of systems for managing records. The Division provides standards, guidelines and advice on records retention scheduling, micrographics, filing, information retrieval, essential records protection, disaster preparedness and recovery, records center operations, public disclosure, and records media.

MICROFILM AND DOCUMENT CONSERVATION

The Division of Archives and Records Management provides imaging production services on a charge-back basis, including source-document microfilming, output of digital information to microfilm, microfilm processing and duplication.

The Division of Archives and Records Management is responsible for identifying, storing, preserving, and providing public access to state and local government records that have continuing historical value beyond their usefulness to the agencies which create them.

DIVISION OF ARCHIVES AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT DIRECTORY

<http://www.secstate.wa.gov/archives/>

MICROFILM & IMAGING SERVICES - TELEPHONE: (360) 586-6232 FAX: (360) 664-8814

RECORDS MANAGEMENT SERVICES - TELEPHONE: (360) 586-4902 FAX: (360) 586-0368

STATE ARCHIVIST/DEPUTY STATE ARCHIVIST - TELEPHONE: (360) 753-5485 FAX: (360) 664-8814

STATE GOVERNMENT ARCHIVES - TELEPHONE: (360) 586-1492 FAX: (360) 664-8814

STATE RECORDS CENTER - TELEPHONE: (360) 753-5468 FAX: (360) 586-9137

REFERENCE REQUEST (360) 753-5468 OR RECORDSCENTER@SECSTATE.WA.GOV

GENERAL INFORMATION

PUBLIC RECORDS DEFINED

Public records are recorded information, regardless of physical form. The term “public records” applies to any paper, correspondence, form, bound volume, film, magnetic medium, drawing or other document, regardless of form or physical characteristics, that has been created or received by any state agency during the course of public business (40.14.010 RCW Preservation and Destruction of Public Records). All public records are required to be maintained and disposed of by state agencies in accordance with the provisions of 40.14 RCW.

All records maintained in electronic format are included in the definition of a “public record” and are governed under the terms of the Preservation and Destruction of Public Records act.

E-mail is a means of sending or receiving information, not a type of record. Information generated or received on an e-mail system needs to be managed according to the informational content of the message. (See Appendix C.)

STATE RECORDS COMMITTEE

“It shall be the duty of the records committee to approve, modify, or disapprove the recommendations on retention schedules of all files of public records...” (40.14.050 RCW). The State Records Committee is comprised of the State Archivist and representatives of the Office of the Attorney General, Office of Financial Management and the Office of the State Auditor.

ARCHIVES AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT DIVISION (ARMD)

ARMD was established by Chapter 40.14 RCW to provide centralized records management services to state and local governments. It is responsible for assisting government agencies to comply with Washington State's laws pertaining to the creation, maintenance and disposal of public records.

STATE AGENCY RECORDS OFFICERS

All state agency records officers have a fundamental responsibility to develop a comprehensive records management program. Beyond meeting an agency's business needs, a well designed program contains three basic goals: 1) to fulfill legal mandates and responsibilities; 2) to store records in the most efficient and cost-effective manner possible; and 3) to assure access, protection, and security to the documentary history of government (RCW 40.14.040).

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

CUSTODY AND DISPOSITION OF STATE AGENCY RECORDS

Public records must be retained in the custody of the office of record and may be destroyed or transferred only in accord with records retention schedules that have been approved by the State Records Committee. Agencies are encouraged to move their inactive records out of more expensive office space to the State Records Center for significant storage cost savings while the records await the expiration of their retention periods.

TRANSFER OF RECORDS TO THE STATE ARCHIVES

Records designated as "Archival" on the State General Schedule must be transferred to the custody of the State Archives at the end of the retention period.

AUTHORITY

The State Records Committee may approve and issue records retention schedules that give state agencies the authority to dispose of or transfer commonly held types of public records. The State General Schedule defines records by governmental function rather than by record type. Consequently, in some cases several "types" of records may be grouped together under one description that encompasses a particular function.

Some agencies may choose to keep some records longer than the designated retention period for administrative or other purposes. Those records are disclosable under the terms of the Public Disclosure Act and are subject to the legal process of discovery for the entire period for which they are retained.

RETENTION PERIOD

The retention periods stated in the State General Schedule are the legal minimum that the law, regulation or official policy of the state will allow.

If an agency has a need to retain a records series for a time period other than that stated in the State General Schedule, the agency records officer must submit a request to the State Records Committee and provide sufficient justification for the deviation.

The State General Schedule column entitled "Retention Period - Official Copy" refers to each agency's primary copy and gives the appropriate agency retention. For some series, the series description will state that a specific agency has responsibility for the primary copy. In these instances, the described column reflects how long other state agencies need to retain their copies.

MODIFICATION AND ADDITIONS

Agencies may not alter or modify State General Schedule items unilaterally. Proposed changes and additions to the State General Schedule may be submitted to the State Records Management Office, where they will be reviewed on a periodic basis.

PREVIOUS VERSIONS OF THE STATE GENERAL SCHEDULE

This State General Schedule supersedes all previous versions. Retention changes to any series will be electronically updated at the State Records Center. Any boxes stored under a revised State General Schedule series will have their destruction dates recalculated according to the revised retention period.

In this 2001 revision of the State General Schedule, all the records series are dated as to their original or revised approval dates at the end of each series description. Series new to this specific edition will be noted as such in the same manner. The numbered edition and date is annotated at the bottom right-hand corner of each page.

DISPOSITION AUTHORITY

The State General Schedule provides blanket authority for the disposition of records series that it contains. These series should not appear on an agency's unique retention schedule.

RECORDS COPIES

The State General Schedule reflects the retention and disposition of the primary record regardless of media. Copies (regardless of media) used for specific legal, fiscal, or administrative purposes may be retained either using the retention for the primary copy or scheduled separately if a different retention is required. Copies of these documents preserved only for convenience of reference or informational purposes may be discarded when no longer needed. *(See GS 50 for additional authority regarding copies.)*

AGENCY UNIQUE RECORDS

The State General Schedule does not attempt to cover records unique to particular agencies or to agency programs. Records retention schedules for such records must be submitted separately to the State Records Committee via the State Records Management Office.

CUT OFF

Unless otherwise noted, the beginning of the retention period (the cut off) is the date of the record.

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GLOSSARY

ACCESSION

- The act and procedures involved in a transfer of legal title and the taking of records or papers into the physical custody of an archival agency.
- The materials involved in such a transfer of custody.

ACTIVE RECORDS

Records that are referenced more than once per month per file drawer are considered active. Active records should be maintained in the office.

ADMINISTRATIVE FILES

Records documenting the operation, management, and administration of an office; usually distinguished from program records that relate to the office's primary function.

ADMINISTRATIVE VALUE

The usefulness of a specific records series for the administration of current or future business.

ALPHABETICAL FILING

Arrangement of records according to the alphabet; used mainly for files referred to by name or topic.

ARCHIVES

- The records, which have passed their retention requirement, that are transferred to archival custody and preserved because of their continuing historical research value.
- The agency responsible for selecting, preserving, and providing public access to archival records.
- The building in which archival records are preserved and referenced.

CASE FILES

See Project Files

CD-ROM -

See Compact Disk, or Read-Only Memory

CENTRALIZED FILES

The files of several offices or organizational units physically or functionally that are centralized and supervised in one location.

CHRONOLOGICAL FILING

Arrangement of records according to date.

CODING

Marking a file code on a document prior to filing.

COMPACT DISK

A machine-readable medium used to reproduce records for rapid retrieval..

CONVENIENCE FILES

Extra copies of records created and kept for quick reference.

CORRESPONDENCE

Any format of information that is an addressed, written communication to or from an agency or its employees.

CUSTODY (OF RECORDS)

The guardianship of records that includes both physical possession and legal title.

CUT-OFF

The termination of files at regular intervals to permit their transfer, retirement, or disposal in complete blocks. Under this process, a file is terminated regularly at the end of a specified period of time or event, and a new file established.

DECENTRALIZED FILES

Files that are created, used, maintained and controlled in or near the office of record.

DISPOSITION

Any manner or method of changing the custody, location, or physical state of records. Includes transfer, microfilming, duplication and destruction.

DISPOSITION AUTHORITY NUMBER (DAN)

The control numbers assigned to records retention schedules and general records retention schedules approved by the State Records Committee.

ELECTRONIC RECORDS

Records created and/or stored by electronic means, usually on computer systems.

ESSENTIAL (VITAL) RECORDS

Records essential to:

- Protect the legal rights of clients, property owners, students and other citizens;
- The resumption and/or continuation of agency operations;
- The re-creation of the legal and financial status of the agency; or
- The fulfillment of obligations to local, state, and federal governments and outside interests.

FILE CLASSIFICATION

See Primary and Secondary

FILE PLAN

A listing of all records series held at each file station, including retention periods, file codes, methods of filing, and disposition instructions.

FISCAL VALUE

The usefulness of a specific records series for the documentation of an agency's financial transactions and obligations.

GENERAL RECORDS RETENTION SCHEDULE

A schedule, listing and assigning minimum retention periods to individual records series, which is approved for all state government agencies, or particular types of agencies, by the State Records Committee. General records retention schedules provide the agencies they cover with continuing blanket authority for the disposition of commonly held records according to their assigned retention periods.

GEOGRAPHICAL FILING

Arrangement of records according to geographical area, alphabetically.

GUIDE

A card or tab divider used in filing systems to identify sections and/or sub-sections of the file. Guides provide physical support and aid in filing and finding individual records.

HISTORICAL VALUE

The usefulness of a specific records series for historical research. Typically, 1% to 5% of an agency's total records have historical value.

IMAGING

The act of reproducing records on digital, or micrographic media.

INACTIVE RECORDS

Records with a reference rate of less than one search per file drawer per month. Such records may be transferred to an inactive records storage center.

INVENTORY

1) A descriptive listing of records series held by an office or file station, including such data as title, inclusive dates, quantity, arrangement, relationships to other series, and description of significant.

Subject content; 2.) A survey of records conducted prior to disposition or the development of a records retention schedule.

LEGAL VALUE

The usefulness of specific records series as documentation of an agency's legally enforceable rights and obligations.

MACHINE-READABLE RECORDS

See Electronic Records and Optical Disc

MATERIAL WITH NO RETENTION VALUE

Material that does not need to be filed or that may be destroyed after a short retention. This includes drafts, worksheets, telephone messages, blank forms, publications, and extra copies of documents created for convenience or public distribution.

MICROFILM

A high-resolution photographic film used to record reduced-size images from original records. The act of recording microphotographs on film.

NUMERICAL FILING

Arrangement of records in sequence according to document number

OFM (OFFICE FILES AND MEMORANDA)

A public records classification provided by RCW 40.14 that identifies records that have purely administrative value.

OPR (Official Public Record)

A public records classification provided by RCW 40.14 that identifies records that have significant legal or fiscal value.

OPTICAL DISK

A machine-readable medium used to reproduce records for rapid retrieval.

OUT-CARD

A guide card used to indicate that records have been taken from the file. Identifies the specific item/file, date, and name of the person temporarily holding the record with an "out-card."

PERMANENT RECORDS

Records that have sufficient legal, fiscal, and/or historical value, to be retained forever.

PRIMARY FILING CLASSIFICATION

The most general category under which records can be sorted and arranged for filing. Primary filing classifications should be defined by the function and retention requirements

PRIMARY RECORD COPY

The original or official copy of a records series.

PROGRAM LEVEL RECORDS

Records which are compiled as direct documentation of the program, as opposed to records created during the course of administering the program. Example: correspondence, subject files, policy statements and planning records documenting the operation.

PROJECT (CASE) FILES

Groups of documents that pertain to a particular action, event, person, or place. May consist of correspondence, form records, memoranda, reports, or a combination of such records.

PROPRIETARY RECORDS

Records containing information of a confidential or highly sensitive nature requiring destruction by shredding, to eliminate the possibility of illegal or undesirable disclosure.

PUBLIC RECORD

See Records

PURGING

See Screening

READ-ONLY MEMORY (ROM)

Electronic record storage systems that allow for research or "reading" access but protect the record from additional entries or alterations.

READING (DAY) FILE

A file of extra copies of outgoing correspondence arranged in chronological order.

RECORDS

Papers (reports, correspondence, legal documents, etc.), photographs, magnetic tape, microfilm, sound recordings, maps, drawings, or other documents, regardless of physical form or characteristics, and including all copies thereof, either organized or received by an institution.

RECORDS CENTER

A low-cost facility for the organized and controlled storage, maintenance, retrieval, and disposition of inactive or non-current records.

RECORDS COORDINATOR

Assistant Records Officer

RECORDS MANAGEMENT

The management function concerned with the efficient, systematic control of records from their creation to their ultimate disposition.

RECORDS OFFICER

The individual responsible for an agency's records management procedures, including retention scheduling, files organization, records storage, and destruction.

RECORDS RETENTION SCHEDULE

A schedule, listing and assigning minimum retention periods to individual records series, which is approved for a specific agency by the State Records Committee. A records retention schedule provides the agency for which it is approved continuing records disposition authority.

RECORDS SERIES

A group of records, performing a specific function, which is used as a unit, filed as a unit and may be transferred or destroyed as a unit. A records series may consist of a single type of form or a number of different types of documents that are filed together to document a specific function.

REFERENCE FILES

Publications, books, periodicals, catalogs, bulletins, reports, maps, theses, tapes, films, photographs, and other materials that are needed as informational resources but are not part of the main body of files.

RETENTION PERIOD

The minimum amount of time required for the retention of a records series on a records retention schedule or general records retention schedule approved by the State Records Committee.

ROM

See Read-Only Memory

SCREENING

Removal of individual papers or folders from a group of records, usually to permit disposal of parts of the file, and retention or transfer of the rest. Also known as purging or weeding.

SECONDARY FILING CLASSIFICATION

The second most general class of filing category under which records can be sorted or arranged for filing; subsidiary to primary classification.

STATE RECORDS COMMITTEE

The body established by the Public Records Act, RCW 40.14.070, to review and approve schedules for the retention and disposition of all state government records. It includes the State Archivist and one representative each from the Offices of the State Attorney General, State Auditor, and Financial Management.

SUBJECT FILE

A file in which documents are arranged alphabetically by general subject or topic.

SUSPENSE FILE

A file in which documents are arranged chronologically by a future date of recall, to remind the user of future tasks and events. Also known as a tickler file.

TICKLER FILE

See Suspense File

TRANSACTIONAL FILES

Records documenting the unique daily transactions or activities of an office that distinguish its primary functions.

TRANSITORY FILE

A file of routine correspondence and other records with short-term value. Its retention period is limited to the interval required for completion of specific actions covered by individual pieces of correspondence.

TRANSMITTAL

Documentation authorizing the disposal, transfers to inactive storage, or transfer to archival storage of public records.

VITAL RECORDS

See Essential Records

WORKING FILE

A file of rough notes, calculations, or preliminary drafts that are assembled and used in the preparation or analysis of other documents; usually retained in desk files or filed separately until project completion.

APPENDIX A – RECORDINGS OF MEETING MINUTES

Stenographic notes or tapes do not constitute the official minutes of a public meeting. They must be transcribed, recorded, and adopted by the governing body at the next public meeting to become official minutes.² Once transcribed, the stenographic notes and tapes become the preliminary drafts and can be destroyed per the State General Schedule, Section 50. **NOTE:** The State Records Committee recommends that transcribed stenographic notes and tapes of open public meetings be retained for three months following adoption of the official meeting minutes. This time frame allows them to serve as backup documentation for any challenges that might be received regarding the minutes.

If a challenge does occur, the stenographic notes or tapes become part of the documentation regarding the challenge and will need to be maintained for the retention of the entire file.

Media recordings other than hard copy may be adopted as the official meeting minutes. Appropriate handling and storage of these media must occur to assure the retention of the information for the duration of the records series retention. If the meeting minutes are designated as “archival,” contact David Hastings (753-1801) at the Division of Archives and Records Management for an analysis of the specific situation.

² Based on AGLO 1972 No. 19

APPENDIX B – WEBSITE RECORDS

The following information is taken from several sources, including: National Historical Publications and Records Commissions (NHPRC) website; and the National Archives of Australia's (NAA) publications: Archiving Web Resources - Guidelines and Archiving Web Resources - Policy. (For more complete and up-to-date information, check the following websites: <http://www.nara.gov/records/index.html> and http://istweb.syr.edu/~mcclure/nhprc/nhprc_chpt_1.html or http://www.naa.gov.au/recordkeeping/er/web_records/guide_intro.html - websites URLs were current as of 8/2001.

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Every state agency is accountable for resources delivered or made available over its public websites. Agencies use websites to publish information, give advice and instructions, and facilitate the provision of products and services. They create interaction between an agency and its clients or customers. It is vital that agencies establish policies, procedures and systems that ensure that full and accurate records of web-based activity are created and retained.

Websites contain and also generate public records that should be maintained to meet any legal obligations for evidence of present and past positions, advice, guidance, transactions or instructions on particular matters it delivers. These records must be authentic, reliable, accurate, and provide durable evidence of web-based activity. These same public records need to be inventoried and included on approved agency records retention schedules which provide authority for the retention and destruction or transfer of such records.

Website records document both the structure and the public face of the agency. Consequently, some of these records will have historical value and need to be transferred to the State Archives at the end of their retention periods.

It is recommended that the policies and procedures directives be developed, maintained, and updated regularly by a team comprised of records management staff, website administrators, and information technology staff. This combination of expertise will help the agency keep abreast with the dramatically and rapidly changing technologies, tools, formats and applications developed for website administration. Records that document the processes involved in planning, designing, producing and maintaining web resources should be captured and retained. Any changes to websites need to be tracked and recorded. These required decisions can only be made within each agency based on the context of a particular website.

Each agency should assess the business risk it faces in maintaining an online presence. The level of risk depends both on the nature of an agency's business and its public profile. The assessment should be used to guide the agency's retention of the public records created for or by its website. Periodic assessments should be made to insure that changes to the risk be reflected in the management of the records.

Some public records placed on websites already exist in a formal record keeping system. However, website content is increasingly being created for placement directly on websites. Agencies need to have procedures in place to capture these public records along with sufficient metadata documenting the content, context and structure of the records and their placement on the website.

Websites that are used as a means of conducting official business between agencies and its clients or customers need to capture and retain individual records into an established record keeping system. The system should help guarantee the authenticity, reliability and accessibility of the records. Without legally sustainable evidence that the record is authentic, a court of law may not admit the record into evidence. These sites are likely to also require the creation and capture of other records relating to site security, such as audit logs, which track use of the site.

Any log tracking changes to websites must have sufficient metadata to interpret the log over time. This metadata must remain useable as long as the associated information is retained.) Use appropriate log analysis software, as raw log files are confusing and often difficult to decipher. Most logs of website transactions will contain personal information about the user. The Governor's Executive Order 00-03 limits the collection of personal information "to that reasonably necessary for purposes of program implementation, authentication of identity, security, and other legally appropriate agency operations."

The NAA suggests various approaches to capturing web-based resources and activity. These could be either an object-driven or event-driven strategy. An object-driven strategy may include periodic snapshots of the website, its data objects and the associated metadata. An event-driven strategy would involve capturing transactions that occur between the website and the user and keeping track of the website changes to enable its full reconstruction at any given date. Often a combination of these two approaches is needed to preserve a complete record of the website and its activity.

A relatively static website comprised of simple documents with low interactivity will have different requirements for maintenance than complex web-based documents or a highly interactive website.

To determine the best strategy for maintaining records of web-based activity, the agency needs to perform an assessment of each of its websites and the type of activities occurring at the sites. Does the website simply offer information or are business transactions performed, or do both occur? How complex and diverse are the web-based activities? How frequently does the website change? What is the risk of the website information being challenged? What are the recordkeeping requirements for the information posted or created by the website? Can the agency's technological environment support the record keeping needs of the website records? Does the agency have the necessary resources?

Maintaining captured web-based records over time should include: ensuring that records are stored in widely accepted, technology-neutral storage and data interchange formats such as XHTML; maintaining master sets in different locations (and in two

different formats where appropriate); refreshing the media regularly; and performing random spot checks to monitor functionality and integrity of the records. Any loss of functionality, content or appearance that occurs as a result of reformatting or migration should be fully documented.

Agencies may already be creating back-ups of the website as part of normal disaster recovery strategies. Back-ups are regularly overwritten and are not useful for record keeping purposes.

Websites are commonly used tools and are becoming more complex as technology advances. Agencies have a responsibility to citizens of the state of Washington to capture, maintain, and properly dispose of or transfer all public records of their agency. It is vitally important that this includes those public records that reside on or are generated by agency websites.

APPENDIX C - ELECTRONIC MAIL (E-MAIL)

Electronic mail is primarily a communication system. E-mail messages may constitute public records under Chapter 40.14RCW with legally mandated retention requirements, or may be information with no retention value. E-mail messages are public records when they are created or received in the transaction of public business and retained as evidence of official policies, actions, decisions or transactions. E-mail that has other valuable informational content relating to state business is also a public record. E-mail messages that are public records must be identified, scheduled and retained just like records in other formats.

In determining the proper length of retention for messages and attachments sent or received electronically, consider each message just as if it was conveyed on paper. All e-mail messages cannot be considered to have equal retention value, but must be managed individually according to the approved retention for the information.

Currently few e-mail systems are designed to categorize and retain information. Public records should be retained in e-mail format only as long as they are being worked on or distributed. To assure appropriate management of public records with assigned retention periods generated or received through an e-mail system, transfer messages to paper, disk, or PC hard drive and file and retain according to the legal retention required for the informational content of each message.

Samples: Electronic Mail (E-Mail) messages that are usually public records and must meet records retention requirements before being destroyed.

- Policy and Procedure Directives
- Correspondence or memoranda related to official public business
- Agenda and minutes of meetings
- Documents related to legal or audit issues
- Messages which document agency actions, decisions, operations and responsibilities
- Documents that initiate, authorize or complete a business transaction
- Drafts of documents that are circulated for comment or approval
- Final reports or recommendations
- Appointment calendars
- E-Mail distribution lists
- Routine information requests
- Other messages sent or received that relate to the transaction of state government business